



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Central Bedfordshire College**

**December 2011**

**022/11**

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## **Preface**

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

## **Purpose of IQER**

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

## **The IQER process**

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

## **Developmental engagement**

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

## Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

## Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

## Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme; instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body/ies as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Central Bedfordshire College carried out in December 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

### Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the broad scope of the Higher Education Self Assessment Report provides an additional opportunity for reflection on practice and impacts positively on the quality of teaching and learning through the monitoring of academic standards
- the new higher education building enhances the quality of the infrastructure and resources, through providing a more flexible working environment and a setting which promotes engagement with employers and interdisciplinary and collaborative working between students
- the effective engagement with employers leads to creative and innovative work which supports the development of employability skills
- the proactive approach to links with the University of Bedfordshire enhances learning opportunities through excellent access to resources, expertise and support.

### Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it would be **advisable** for the College to:

- continue the development of the quality manual with one title, to support and embed the transparency and consistency of standards across all programmes
- ensure the inclusion of information about learning support and disability entitlement in the higher education course guides so that they are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- consider the development of more generic materials to support work-based learning and so provide greater consistency in the support of learning opportunities
- improve the clarity of information and advice on progression routes and options in the higher education guides for individual programmes.

## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Central Bedfordshire College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Bedfordshire (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Graham Brotherton, Mrs Clare Davison, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (reviewers) and Mrs Mandy Hobart (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College, separate meetings with staff including awarding body representatives, employers and students, the student written submission and QAA review reports. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3 In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.

4 Central Bedfordshire College (known as Dunstable College until December 2009) is a medium sized general further education college with approximately 5,900 full and part-time students. Approximately 58 per cent of learners are aged over 19 years of age and 78 per cent attend the College on a part-time basis. Female learners represent 58 per cent of the student body and 19 per cent of all students are from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to 7 per cent of the regional population. The College mission is 'to provide outstanding quality and leadership in the delivery of skills and education for the economy and community of central Bedfordshire'. The College operates over five locations across the Central Bedfordshire unitary authority. All higher education is based at the Dunstable campus in the new dedicated Higher Education Centre. There are currently 145 higher education enrolments comprising 72 full-time and 73 (35.5 full-time equivalent) part-time students. The higher education programmes are mainly in the creative industries sector, with additional provision in education. All higher education provision offered by the College is validated by the University of Bedfordshire.

5 The College has delivered higher education programmes for over 20 years, initially through higher national certificates and diplomas linked to the engineering and print industries. Despite the decline of the print and motor industry, the strong legacy in the arts has remained through excellent links with a range of employers in the design field, including London-based organisations. The provision offered seeks to meet the needs of learners who want to progress through an academic route into employment, and employers who are seeking employees with higher level skills and knowledge to support their businesses.

6 The higher education programmes validated by the University of Bedfordshire and funded by HEFCE, together with the full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows:

### **University of Bedfordshire**

- FdA Contemporary Fine Art Practice (9.5)
- FdA Creative and Editorial Photography (23.0)
- FdA Educational Practice (15.5)
- FdA Fashion and Surface Pattern Design (15.5)
- FdA Graphic Design and Advertising (23.0)
- BA (Hons) Graphic Design for Print and New Media (5)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education & Certificate in Education (16)

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

7 The College's higher education provision is through a formal partnership with the University of Bedfordshire with responsibilities set out in the Collaborative Agreement. The partnership agreement with the University requires that programmes are subject to its quality assurance procedures, which govern the College's management of its higher education provision. Link tutors are appointed by the University to work with course teams and to ensure effective management of quality assurance and academic standards.

### **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

8 The College continues to reinforce its commitment to the development and growth of higher education. The higher education centre opened in 2010 continues to be developed and the majority of higher education provision is now based within the centre. The common location of higher education programmes provides opportunities for students from all areas to mix together. The College is running Edexcel approved programmes and is also working closely with the University of Bedfordshire to develop new Foundation Degrees in science and technology subjects.

### **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a written submission to the Summative review team. The submission was based on information from a questionnaire completed by 60 higher education students from across the provision, and two student meetings. The report was drafted and edited by a student on the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education. The team found the student submission clear and informative and explored its content in meetings with students to gain a clear picture of their learning experience.



## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

#### **How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

10 The College has a well defined reporting structure for the management of higher education delivered in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and formalised through a Collaborative Agreement. Overall responsibility for the management of higher education lies with the College's Corporation's Standards Committee. Standards and quality assurance are overseen by a strategic Higher Education Steering Group, chaired by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Standards, which reports to the Governors Standards Committee. The Higher Education Steering Group is attended by heads of department with responsibility for the management and delivery of the higher education curriculum, the Learning Improvement Manager and the Marketing Manager. The group receives summary reports in response to external examiners' reports along with annual monitoring reports and monitors progress against actions. A summary of actions is incorporated in to the Higher Education Self Assessment Report and sends responses to the University and external examiners. The production of the Higher Education Self Assessment Report provides a significant addition to the quality assurance process. The report's broad scope represents an additional opportunity for reflection on practice and impacts positively on the quality of teaching and learning through the monitoring of academic standards, and use of the academic infrastructure.

11 A higher education quality procedures manual, also referred to as the core values operational manual or corporate manual, is being compiled to support standardisation of the management of quality and standards. The manual is available on the staff portal. However, it remains a work in progress and is not yet embedded fully in the quality processes. The College indicates that this is a key task for the newly appointed Learning Improvement Manager. The College is advised to continue the development of the quality manual to support and embed the transparency and consistency of standards management across all programmes, and that a single document title is applied to enhance clarity.

12 The College's quality framework includes both college and partner university quality assurance processes which come together to provide a coherent and effective mechanism for monitoring provision, informed by the University's Quality Handbook for Collaborative Provision. The quality framework includes guidance on lesson observations that sets out standards specific to higher education, a process currently under development to reflect the requirements of higher education standards. A comprehensive induction process and internal and external quality review processes to assure standards are organised on a systematic basis as part of a clear and transparent Quality Calendar. Lesson observations inform the overarching Quality Improvement Plan to support the ongoing maintenance of academic standards.

13 Management of higher education programmes is embedded within curriculum areas, which include both further and higher education provision. Responsibility for day-to-day management of the higher education programmes and the maintenance of academic standards rests with the heads of department and programme leaders. Annual monitoring reports and associated action plans demonstrate consistent monitoring of quality and improvements, and responses to external examiners' reports. Mid-term

programme reviews for all higher education programmes, higher education partnership meetings and the Bedfordshire Federation meetings attended by the Vice Principal, also inform the quality cycle. The meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the development of new opportunities and to share good practice. Clear, effective and productive communications between the partner institutions support the monitoring of standards and curriculum delivery and development.

14 Feedback from higher education students is used to support improvements to the provision. Each year there are two higher education forums which form part of the College Higher Education Quality Calendar. Students confirm that their views are actively sought and acted upon. For example, higher education students were included in discussions about the design of the new higher education building and have been central to the decision to provide additional equipment such as new cutting tables and sewing machines. One higher education student is elected to serve on the College's Governing body and plays an active role in meetings and in the strategic Governors' Away Day. Students confirm that information on College policies and procedures is readily available to them from both the College website or directly from College staff. The information provided helps to support the students' understanding of academic standards.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

15 The College has an appropriate engagement with the Academic Infrastructure in relation to professional practice. The College takes it into account when producing validation documents for new programmes and in the construction of programme and module specifications. The College delivers programmes validated by the University and also contributes to the development of modules in close liaison with the link tutor, reflecting appropriate subject benchmark and Foundation Degree benchmark statements and the FHEQ. The College's induction, assessment, work-based learning and programme design all reflect the requirements of the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. Consequently the Academic Infrastructure is embedded and reflected in management and quality assurance strategies appropriate for each of the higher education programmes. Changes to the Academic Infrastructure are communicated to staff mainly through the link tutor meetings, and staff development sessions held at both the College and the University. Staff are able to access timely and appropriate information and advice from through the University's partnership office and link tutors.

### **How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?**

16 The College has a clearly defined relationship with the University underpinned by the quality procedures outlined in its Quality Handbook for Collaborative Provision and the Collaborative Agreement. Each programme has a link tutor appointed by the University, who works with programme leaders to monitor standards and quality. They attend programme team meetings where responses to external examiners' reports are discussed and monitoring of the review of teaching and assessment takes place. Link tutors have a clear role in providing access to programme validation information and advising on expressions of interest from the College in the development of new provision based on market research. The link tutor role is highly valued by College staff and informs strategies for monitoring standards.

17 Processes and procedures for ensuring the standards of assessment are effective. There are well established systems for internal verification and moderation on all programmes. These ensure that all aspects of assessment are clearly linked to the intended

learning outcomes. Following a recommendation from the Developmental engagement, a more robust mechanism for recording the moderation of summative and formative feedback within programme teams and across the College has been implemented. External examiners' reports confirm that student work is of an appropriate academic standard and that feedback is well constructed. Good practice is identified and areas for improvement tracked through the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, as discussed in paragraph 10. Additional scrutiny of external examiner reports is undertaken by the University of Bedfordshire through its Field Board meetings. Staff value the fact the University is involved in this process and confirm that it ensures that all actions are tracked to completion.

### **What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standard(s)?**

18 A wide-ranging programme of in-service training is provided by the College. Staff development needs are linked to staff appraisal, with an appropriate number of sessions organised by the College that relate directly to higher education provision. Joint training days are a feature of the relationship with the partner University. All staff teaching on higher education programmes are appropriately qualified in their subject area, and undertake teacher training. There is close liaison with University staff on matters concerning academic standards and staff confirmed that they have, for example, recently attended sessions on the Academic Infrastructure in relation to programme assessment and the prioritisation of tutorial activities.

19 Staff are able to access external staff development opportunities as outlined in paragraph 31, including attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars. College staff also attend staff development events organised by the University of Bedfordshire. For example, the University recently ran sessions on the requirements of the new Quality Code and the implications of change, which College staff found useful. Staff are supported on master's programmes and a number are undertaking postgraduate research-based qualifications. Individual skills are updated through professional activities and attendance at forums and workshops held at the University. Course journals confirm that relevant professional updating takes place and that staff development is monitored and evaluated at programme, team and partnership level. These opportunities are greatly valued by staff. For new staff, a comprehensive induction takes place, including the use of the University virtual learning environment and the mentoring of teaching and assessment activities.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.**

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

### **How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

20 The College is responsible for the operational management of its higher education programmes including the provision of teaching and learning, student support and learning resources. Responsibilities for management and quality of the learning opportunities are clearly delegated through the higher education management structure as discussed in paragraph 10. Each head of department is responsible for the management and monitoring

of their provision and providing reports to the Higher Education Steering Group. Annual monitoring reports and action plans are also monitored by the Learning Improvement Manager to ensure that good practice is identified and shared and areas for development are addressed. This system of annual monitoring and review also links to the faculty level reviews of the University. The College's management of quality of higher education provision, as outlined in paragraph 13, follows the College's own guidelines. Staff report that the process is clear and supportive, and progress is clearly evidenced.

21 Students report that their views are actively sought and contribute to enhancement of the learning experience. For example, students lobbied to have all higher education provision housed in a single building to foster more interaction between students from across programmes. In response, the College acquired and refurbished a new building to accommodate all higher education programmes. This provides an area where higher education students can integrate and socialise. This new environment also promotes both creativity and interdisciplinary working among staff and students. It also facilitates engagement with employers who are impressed by the standard of resources and the creative feel of the environment. New work-related briefs have been developed, and collaborative working between students from different programmes takes place. A recent fashion show brought together students from photography, graphic design and fashion, and work with printing and advertising agencies has also involved interdisciplinary work. The development of the new higher education building enhances the quality of the infrastructure and resources, through providing a more flexible working environment and a setting which promotes engagement with employers and interdisciplinary and collaborative working between students.

### **How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding body to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?**

22 The collaborative agreement between the College and the University makes it clear that the provision of learning resources is the responsibility of the College. Students also have access to the University's virtual learning environment, and library facilities. College staff have editing access to the virtual learning environment for their own modules and use this to provide an appropriate range of resources to support learning. Students from the College attend lectures at the University and this is reciprocated through attendance of University students at guest lectures/seminars at the College. This creates a sense of shared identity.

23 A continuing strength of the College's higher education provision is its engagement with employers, as noted in the Development engagement. Students in the creative arts, for example, have the opportunity to work with employers on live briefs that reflect industry standards and meet the University's requirements. Employers also provide formative feedback on student work, which promotes understanding of professional practices. A notable example of this is found in the 'Type can speak project' where students worked with a local company to create a book to highlight how type-faces can enhance effective communication. The student work produced creative and exciting images which have raised the profile of the company, and the employer is keen to work with the College on future commercial projects. The effective engagement with employers leads to creative and innovative work which serves to support students in developing employability skills.

24 Induction, tutorials and guidance workshops provide support for students in finding and utilising suitable work placements. Students feel they are well supported in this process by their tutors. However, while there is a range of information in each of the relevant unit handbooks to support placements, the information is not consistent in either content or format. The team recommends that the College consider the development of more generic

materials to support work-based learning and so provide greater consistency in the support of learning opportunities.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

25 The College, in partnership with the University, has appropriate procedures to support the quality of learning opportunities reflecting the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure. Procedures for referencing the Academic Infrastructure are strongly supported by University link tutors, and programme teams make reference to the subject benchmark statements in the development of teaching strategies. Staff have received training through college-based activities and through events at the University to share in good practice and gain updated information. Clear programme specifications are linked to subject and qualification benchmarks. The course information forms and unit information forms make appropriate reference to the Academic Infrastructure, reflecting subject benchmarks and appropriate sections of the *Code of practice*. The moderation and approval processes, which involves both link tutors and external examiners, provides a further mechanism for ensuring compliance with the Academic Infrastructure.

### **How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?**

26 Programme leaders are responsible for maintaining a course journal for all programmes. The journal provides a narrative commentary on the academic health of the programme. Journal entries draw upon information such as unit evaluations, students' academic performance, external examiners' reports and other relevant records. The journals also contain an evaluation of activities and visits which inform planning and programme reviews. In addition, the journal is particularly useful in recording issues raised through student feedback mechanisms, and provides a vehicle to inform students on how issues have been addressed, through publication on the virtual learning environment. Course journals effectively support the evaluative process and the student learning experience.

27 The College has a well-developed and effective teaching and learning strategy. The strategy includes the lesson observation process and the performance management of teaching staff. Each lecturer has a scheduled observation at least once a year and an individual action plan to enhance their teaching skills is developed. This action plan feeds into continuing professional development and training plans which are further informed by the College's appraisal process. The profile of good or better teaching as assessed by the College is high at 85 per cent. Heads of department also carry out regular drop in observations of teaching at least once per term, and there is a peer observation scheme which supports the sharing of effective teaching strategies. Students report high levels of satisfaction with their teaching, indicating that staff are knowledgeable, approachable and supportive. Where new staff are recruited to higher education teaching, they receive mentor support for their teaching and assessment. All new staff are approved by the University to ensure that their qualifications meet programme requirements.

### **How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?**

28 All higher education students take part in a structured induction programme. Students are provided with programme handbooks, module handbooks and an introduction to the virtual learning environment, as well as library inductions both at the College and the University. Student learning needs are also assessed to ensure that support is put in place at an early stage. As a result of small group sizes, peer interaction, support, and mentoring between students is a strength that is effectively managed by the higher education

programme teams. This includes peer critiques, peer observations and peer support in taught sessions which students report as promoting confidence and achievement. The College also operates a clear process of moderating assessed work and feedback to students which has been commended by external examiners as clear and supportive. The effectiveness of this high level of support is reflected in retention and achievement rates which are five per cent above the national average. Students value the peer working and review process as well as the high level of individual and group support offered by the programme teams.

29 Students receive good academic and pastoral support through the structured tutorial programme which includes individual tutorials, preparation for work related learning and study skill support. Additional tutorials are also scheduled outside of allocated tutorial time to support those with additional needs and those who find part-time attendance at College challenging. When in work-placement, students are provided with trained work place mentors all of whom have a handbook to support their role.

30 The College is committed to engaging with the students as partners in the management of quality assurance. Student representatives are invited to all team meetings and their views inform programme evaluations and action plans. The College has also developed a Higher Education Learner Forum to ensure that cross-college issues are debated. Student feedback based on meetings, surveys, end of module reports and the national student survey is analysed and informs the College's Higher Education Self Assessment Report and action plan. The 2011 national student survey, for example, showed that students expressed concern about the timeliness of feedback on some programme assignments. The feedback process has subsequently been reviewed to ensure that feedback is provided prior to work being sent to the University for moderation.

### **What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?**

31 The College has a clear policy for staff development which includes outcomes of teaching observations and appraisals as discussed in paragraph 27, to enhance staff knowledge and skills and benefit programmes. Staff are supported in undertaking a range of scholarly activities and a number are studying for master's degrees and research-based post-graduate qualifications with the University of Bedfordshire. Personal and professional development is also supported, and staff are encouraged to develop links with appropriate subject and professional networks, including roles as external examiners. In the creative industries area, for example, staff attend the Royal Society of Arts meetings, a forum for showcasing new concepts and for sharing practice between professionals. New ideas and concepts are used to inform the curriculum and to ensure currency of teaching and learning. Heads of department monitor, evaluate and coordinate staff development within their own areas. They also take part in planning and evaluating cross-college staff development through the Higher Education Steering Group. Several higher education staff development events over the last year have provided opportunities for staff to take forward good practice and recommendations from the Developmental engagement, and to share good practice.

### **How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?**

32 The proximity of the College to the University and the effective relationships between both academic and support staff at the two institutions means that the College students are able to make effective use of the University resources. Students on graphic design and other creative industries programmes also attend lectures at the University, and

report that they feel part of both the University and College education communities. Library inductions, for example, are arranged at the start of each academic year at both the College and the University to ensure that students are aware of the range of resources available to them. These are followed up by individual or small group inductions on request, covering e-resources, research and referencing. Information, including user guides and links to the University, is available on the virtual learning environment. The College library staff also note details of relevant texts available at the University, and maintain good links with University subject liaison librarians to ensure that student needs are met. The proactive approach to links with the University of Bedfordshire enhances learning opportunities through excellent access to resources, expertise and support.

33 The College continues to promote the use of e-books to enhance access to essential resources and accessible reference materials to meet assessment requirements. Programme teams use the virtual learning environment to direct students to reading lists, e-books and online journals where appropriate. Students report that the College responds rapidly and effectively to requests for reasonable additional resources, and purchases are made within budget limitations. Resources support academic and work-related learning, and high levels of student satisfaction are reflected in both end of module surveys and the national student survey data.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

### **Core theme 3: Public information**

#### **What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?**

34 The College's responsibilities for publishing programme information are detailed in the University's Quality Handbook for Collaborative Provision. The College is responsible for the publication of the higher education programme handbooks, which are based on a University template and contextualised to reflect individual programme learning outcomes. The College is guided by the University Guide to Subject Communities, Programme and Module Handbooks. Following a recommendation for the Developmental engagement, the handbooks for all the creative arts programmes include aims, learning outcomes and programme information as well as academic regulations. Handbooks and programme and unit information sheets are available to the students on the University's virtual learning environment and are accessed as part of induction. The students on education programmes have handbooks and programme information which is also available in hard copy. The students confirmed they use the handbooks regularly for programme information and guidance. All module handbooks include reading lists, but in creative arts subjects, updates to reading lists are only available through the virtual learning environment. The College also provides a comprehensive handbook for mentors to assist them in their support of students in the workplace across all programme areas. This has been well received by employers.

35 Higher education students have access to the University's virtual learning environment on the same basis as students undertaking their studies at the University. As a result, very little higher education information is published on the College's virtual platform. Staff teaching on higher education courses are able to upload assessment information, teaching materials and resources on to the University's website to support the students, although it is not used extensively as an interactive learning tool. By accessing and using the

University virtual learning environment, staff and students use a single system for online communications.

36 The College publishes a dedicated guide for higher education provision which is available both electronically and in printed format. This includes details on finance, application procedures, entry requirements and programme units, and is updated annually. However, the details covering individual programme progression in the higher education guide are vague and inconsistent. Students confirm that progression options are explained at the application stage, during interview and in tutorials. To support consistency of applicant and student understanding, the team recommends that the College improve the clarity of information and advice on progression routes and options in the higher education guides for individual programmes.

37 The information and procedures in publications for prospective students and applicants align with the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. Information can be accessed in a range of formats and languages on request. However, there is no pre-programme information in the higher education programme guide covering learning support or how the entitlements of disabled students are met. The team advises the College to ensure the inclusion of learning support and disability entitlement information in the higher education course guides, so that they are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?  
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

38 The College's marketing department works with the University to ensure that programme specific material, use of the University logo, public relations information and website content are approved prior to their publication. The College Marketing and Communications Manager attends monthly meetings with the University marketing team to ensure completeness of marketing information. The meetings promote clear communications and ensure that there is a good understanding of published information requirements, accuracy and currency of information. The Marketing and Communications Manager is also a member of the College Equality & Diversity Committee, which ensures all marketing materials are accessible to all College students.

39 Information published by the College is drafted by programme teams and agreed with link tutors at the University to ensure that it is both accurate and consistent with that published by the University. The College policy for publications also requires that the head of department approves content before it is passed to the marketing department. The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Standards retains overall responsibility for the accuracy and consistency of public information. Items are reviewed by members of the Higher Education Steering Committee, so ensuring an objective review of the consistency and clarity of content of all higher education documentation across the College. Within the College, the clarity of public information is tested with the students through focus groups. Responses received have confirmed that information is clear and useful. The mechanisms for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing are enhanced by the close relationship with the University and the small student cohorts.

40 The students have clear access to academic regulations, a common contents list in handbooks and assessment schedules on the virtual learning environment. This supports the clarity of assessment requirements and workload demands at an early stage, as advised in Developmental engagement. The common contents list includes information on plagiarism, appeals procedures, extenuating circumstances, late submission and



referencing. Students receive information to raise awareness of the penalties for breaching academic regulations, and procedures to support special circumstances, taking forward the recommendation from the Developmental engagement report. The use of common formats for key documents across programmes supports consistency and clarity of information and is well received by students.

**The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.**

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment**

41 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in December 2010. The lines of enquiry reflected a broad range of assessment issues.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College ensure that work-related learning supports and enhances student learning, and is reflected in the assessment methodology?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How does the College ensure that students receive good quality feedback on both formative and summative assessment?

**Line of enquiry 3:** What mechanisms does the College have for ensuring consistency and clarity of published information in relation to assessment?

42 The good practice identified by Developmental engagement included the use of reflective journals and logs to embed formative assessment and feedback within learning strategies. The use of commercial sector briefs and good quality mentoring serves to ensure students are effectively supported and gain a range of employability skills based on current industry practices. Use of e-books provides flexible access to resources and supports student learning. Comprehensive unit information forms clarify assessment requirements. The team highlighted the good range of mechanisms used to ensure that the student voice informs developments at course and College level.

43 The Developmental engagement team identified as advisable that the College include assessment schedules in all course handbooks and that all handbooks have a list of common contents including information on academic regulations. Provision of clear and detailed guidance and advice on work placements, and the development of more robust mechanisms for the moderation of feedback were found to be desirable. As some students had indicated that they received a wide range of handbooks and information documents, the team also recommended that the College review current documentation to avoid possible duplication.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

44 The College offers five Foundation Degrees, four of which are in the creative industries sector and one in education practice. All are validated by Central Bedfordshire University. The College's niche provision is based on the historical links with the region's print industry and represented by Foundation Degrees in Contemporary Fine Art Practice; Fashion and Surface Pattern Design; Creative and Editorial Photography; and Graphic Design and Advertising. The Foundation Degree in Educational Practice meets the needs of

the education sector, which is one of the sub-region's largest employers. New developments for science, technology, engineering and mathematics at Foundation Degree level are being explored with the Central Bedfordshire University to meet local skills development needs.

45 The College would like to expand the number of students studying at level 4 and 5 and is working with partners to bid for additional HEFCE places available to institutions charging less than £7,000. To ensure that skills needs are met, the College has also obtained Edexcel permission to offer Higher National Certificates including computing, media, business and electrical engineering.

46 The team concludes that the College has effective mechanisms for the management of Foundation Degrees. Programmes are regularly reviewed and monitoring reports produced according to partnership requirements. This provides transparent evaluation of the provision, which is reported to senior management groups both within the College and the University. The good practice and recommendations shown below apply equally to Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

47 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Central Bedfordshire College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Bedfordshire.

48 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the broad scope of the Higher Education Self Assessment Report provides an additional opportunity for reflection on practice and impacts positively on the quality of teaching and learning through the monitoring of academic standards (paragraph 10)
- the new higher education building enhances the quality of the infrastructure and resources, through providing a more flexible working environment and a setting which promotes engagement with employers and interdisciplinary and collaborative working between students (paragraph 21)
- the effective engagement with employers leads to creative and innovative work which supports the development of employability skills (paragraph 23)
- the proactive approach to links with the University of Bedfordshire enhances learning opportunities through excellent access to resources, expertise and support (paragraph 32).

49 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- continue the development of the quality manual with one title, to support and embed the transparency and consistency of standards across all programmes (paragraph 11)
- ensure the inclusion of information about learning support and disability entitlement information in the higher education course guides so that they are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* (paragraph 37).

50 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- consider the development of more generic materials to support work-based learning and so provide greater consistency in the support of learning opportunities (paragraph 24)
- improve the clarity of information and advice on progression routes and options in the higher education guides for individual programmes (paragraph 36).

51 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

52 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

53 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Central Bedfordshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the broad scope of the Higher Education Self Assessment Report provides an additional opportunity for reflection on practice and impacts positively on the quality of teaching and learning through the monitoring of academic standards (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure the Higher Education Self Assessment Report is further embedded into both new and existing curriculum offer</p> <p>Continue to refine the self-evaluation process to aid consistency of academic standards</p>	July 2012	<p>Vice Principal Curriculum</p> <p>Learning Improvement Manager</p>	<p>Improved self-reflection across the whole of higher education provision</p> <p>Improve planning and quality of teaching and learning</p> <p>Student satisfaction</p>	<p>Higher Education Steering Group</p> <p>Governor Standards</p>	<p>Higher Education Steering Group Annual Review</p> <p>University Annual Monitoring Report process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the new higher education building enhances the quality of the infrastructure and</li> </ul>	Identify further opportunities to revitalise the Higher Education Centre through operational planning process	April 2012	<p>Vice Principal curriculum</p> <p>Heads of Department</p>	Improved recreational facilities - the development of recreational areas for students,	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Higher Education Steering Group</p>	<p>Student satisfaction survey</p> <p>Higher Education Forum</p>

resources, through providing a more flexible working environment and a setting which promotes engagement with employers and interdisciplinary and collaborative working between students (paragraph 21)				maximising classroom space, promotion of galley space to outside bodies  Range of exhibits/programme presented throughout the year		Income generation from Galley take-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective engagement with employers leads to creative and innovative work which supports the development of employability skills (paragraph 23)</li> </ul>	Developmental engagement with employers to help support innovative projects across all subject areas	September 2012	Course team leaders	Increased employability skills for our students to further enhance professional practice via a wider range of employer engagement opportunities	Heads of Department  Higher Education Steering Group  Link Tutors	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Annual Monitoring Report process  Employers Forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proactive approach to links with the University of Bedfordshire enhances learning opportunities through excellent</li> </ul>	Maintain close relationship with the University to help further enhance resources and support for learners	September 2012	Course team Leaders  Link tutors	Sharing of facilities to include: joint trips and visits, staff development, team teaching, course journals	Heads of Department  Steering Group	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Annual Monitoring Report process  Link tutors

access to resources, expertise and support (paragraph 32).						
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue the development of the quality manual with one title to support and embed the transparency and consistency of standards across all programmes (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	Develop a fit for purpose higher education quality manual that aids consistency of standards across higher education programmes	July 2012	Vice Principal Curriculum  Learning Improvement Manager	Higher education quality manual embedded in the College quality cycle  Consistent course management across higher education courses	Vice Principal Curriculum  Higher Education Steering Group	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Annual Monitoring Report process  Quality Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure the inclusion of information about learning support and disability entitlement information in the higher education course guides so that they are aligned with the <i>Code of practice, Section 3:</i></li> </ul>	Update current website with information on learning support and disability entitlement  Update future higher education guides with information on learning support and disability entitlement, in line with the <i>Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled</i>	April 2012	Marketing Manager	All relevant information pertaining to higher education programmes updated on both website and guides.	Vice Principal Curriculum  Higher Education Steering Group	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Marketing Self Assessment Report

<i>Disabled students (paragraph 37).</i>	<i>students</i>					
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider the development of more generic materials to support work-based learning and so provide greater consistency in the support of learning opportunities (paragraph 24)</li> </ul>	Develop consistency in hand-outs of information pertaining to work-based learning	May 2012	Higher Education Steering Group  Course team leaders	Standardisation of work based learning information for all higher education courses	Vice Principal Curriculum  Higher Education Steering Group	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Student Satisfaction Survey  Employer forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the clarity of information and advice on progression routes and options in the higher education guides for individual programmes (paragraph 36).</li> </ul>	Analysis of progression routes from all programmes for inclusion in guide and website	April 2012	Course team leaders  Marketing team	Information Advice and Guidance embedded into higher education guide and website information for 2013/2014 offer	Vice Principal Curriculum  Higher Education Steering Group	Higher Education Self Assessment Report  Student Satisfaction Survey

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